

invits

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April 19, 1974

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Dr. James H. Billington  
Woodrow Wilson International Center  
for Scholars  
Smithsonian Institution Building  
Washington, D.C. 20560

Dear Dr. Billington,

Thank you for your letter of April 4th. and its most flattering invitation. I have been well aware of the Woodrow Wilson Center and during the last couple of years have noticed the names of many of the very good people that you have brought to it. I was intrigued by your reference to the Center as a living memorial to President Wilson. I might try to remind you of the Wietzmann Institute in Israel as a possible competing example, although the fact that it also has bricks and stone may disqualify it from the domain you specified.

However, I am of course most sympathetic with the aims that you have expressed for the Wilson Center and would happily offer whatever help I could towards their implementation.

I am afraid, however, that for me to pursue the invitation that you have extended to become a fellow of the Center in the near future, is not within the realm of possibility, although none of us would readily permanently close off future options that were not costly to keep open. But I do not feel that it would merit further effort on either your part or mine at the present time.

I am pleased to know that you are aware of my work at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences here, and of course I am always glad to know that there are thoughtful people reading my papers. (If you were interested in my writing on the genetics of human nature, you may also wish to see another item that I enclose herewith). These activities are, of course, to some degree a counterpart of the environment that you are seeking to provide in Washington although each center must have its own limitations and characteristics. I assume you would not violently object to my offering substitute nominations, and I will give the matter some thought in the light of the ambitious aspirations that you have expressed for the Center. I do not want to give you any off hand suggestions but I trust that you will have thought of being in touch with the president and staff of the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences.

Dr. James H. Billington

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If we might have an opportunity to meet for a goal-free discussion of the Center, I would look forward to it and I hope that you might let me know if you will be in this area at some future time.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr  
Enclosure